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ORIGIN INR-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 SAM-01 IO-14 SAJ-01 NEA-11

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EUR/RPM:RBENRLEY

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 022734

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, NATO, UR, CH, VS
SUBJECT: PARCEL CLASH EMBARRASSES DRV, PLEASES USSR

REF: US MISSION NATO'S 00445

INR PROVIDES FOLLOWING COMMENT ON PARCEL ISLANDS INCIDENT
FOR USE IN NATO DISCUSSION:

1. ARMED CLASH BETWEEN PRC AND RVN OVER PARCEL ISLANDS
IN JANUARY PROVOKED REACTIONS CUTTING ACROSS POLITICAL
ALIGNMENTS AND PLACING SWORN ENEMIES ON SAME SIDE OF ISSUE.
THUS, ROC TOOK POSITION REFLECTING ITS CLAIM OF SOVEREIGNTY
OVER ALL CHINESE TERRITORY, AND ISSUED JANUARY 18 FOREIGN
MINISTRY STATEMENT DESCRIBING ISLANDS AS "INHERENTLY PARTS
OF TERRITORIES OF REPUBLIC OF CHINA."

2. REACTION OF DRV ILLUSTRATES DELICACY OF ITS POSITION.
TAKING SIDES INVOLVES CHOICE EITHER OF SUPPORTING HATED
SAIGON RIVAL WHILE OPPOSING PRC ACTION, OR OF APPROVING
PRC'S SEIZURE OF TERRITORY WHICH CAN BE REGARDED AS PART OF
VIETNAMESE NATION HANOI IS SEEKING TO UNIFY. HANOI
APPARENTLY DECIDED BEST COURSE WAS TO INDICATE UNHAPPINESS
UNOFFICIALLY WHILE REMAINING OFFICIALLY SILENT. ACCORDING
TO AFP CORRESPONDENT IN HANOI, "AUTHORIZED NORTH VIETNAMESE
SOURCES" TOLD HIM THAT "PRESERVATION OF TERRITORIAL
SOVEREIGNTY IS SACRED CAUSE FOR EVERY NATION AND THAT
DISPUTES SHOULD BE SETTLED BY NEGOTIATIONS." SOURCES NOTED
FURTHER THAT "FREQUENTLY COMPLEX DISPUTES OF TERRITORIES
AND FRONTIERS BETWEEN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES DEMAND CAREFUL
AND CIRCUMSPECT EXAMINATION." HANOI-BASED CORRESPONDENT
OF JAPANESE CP ORGAN AKAHATA REPORTED SIMILAR REACTION.
ALTHOUGH NO PUBLIC REACTION IS AVAILABLE FOR PRG SOURCES,
IT WOULD APPEAR THAT PRG'S DILEMMA EVEN SHARPER THAN DRV'S,
SINCE IT CLAIMS TO RUN PARALLEL GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM.
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LARGER ISSUE, OF COURSE, IS WHETHER PARCEL STRAIN MIGHT
AFFECT BROADER DRV/PRC RELATIONSHIP.

3. USSR HAS BEEN UNABLE RESIST OPPORTUNITY TO NEEDLE PRC
EVEN THOUGH THIS INVOLVES PORTRAYAL SAIGON REGIME AS VICTIM
OF AGGRESSION, POSSESSING INTERNATIONAL IDENTITY AND
DESERVING OF PROTECTION UNDER ACCEPTED NORMS OF INTERNA-
TIONAL LAW. SOVIET MEDIA ACCOUNTS OF INCIDENT CITE FOREIGN

REACTIONS FROM NEW YORK, TOKYO, MANILA, NEW DELHI, LONDON, AND PARIS. PRAVDA JANUARY 26 AND 27 PRESENTED PICTURE OF EXPANSIONIST CHINA FLAUNTING UN STRICTURES AGAINST NON-USE OF FORCE, UPSETTING ASIAN BALANCE OF POWER, AND CAUSING ALARM THROUGHOUT ASIA. SELECTION OF FOREIGN PRESS REFERENCES LEANS TO TWO EXPLANATIONS FOR CHINESE ACTION" DESIRE TO DOMINATE ASIA AND NEED TO DISTRACT ATTENTION OF CHINESE PEOPLE FROM INTERNAL PROBLEMS.

4. ONE SOVIET DIFFICULTY IS THAT USSR APPARENTLY RECOGNIZES PARCELS AS CHINESE. SEVERAL SOVIET ATLASES REFER TO ISLANDS AS "HSISHA (PARCEL)" AND DESIGNATE THEM AS CHINESE. HOWEVER, ONE SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE SAID OWNERSHIP OF ISLANDS SHOULD BE SETTLED BY PARTIES INVOLVED, NOTING (INCORRECTLY) THAT NOT ONLY SAIGON AND PEKING BUT ALSO MANILA HAVE ADVANCED CLAIMS, AND THAT TO KNOWLEDGE OF SOVIET MFA, NORTH VIETNAM HAS NEVER STATED ITS POSITION ON OWNERSHIP OF ISLANDS. OTHER SOVIET DIPLOMATS HAVE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR HANOI OR REFERRED TO ISLANDS AS VIETNAMESE.

5. MOSCOW UNDOUBTEDLY WELCOMES POSSIBILITY OF STRAINS IN PRC/DRV RELATIONS. DURING VIETNAM CONFLICT, USSR WAS LOCKED INTO POSTURE OF AIDING DRV, EVEN TO DETRIMENT OF OTHER SOVIET INTERESTS, BECAUSE ANYTHING LESS WOULD HAVE INCREASED DRV'S DEPENDENCE ON PEKING. NOW, AT TIME WHEN SOVIETS ARE SHOWING SOME CONCERN THAT PARIS AGREEMENTS MAY COLLAPSE, PARCEL INCIDENT ALLOWS THEM GREATER FREEDOM IN DEALING WITH HANOI, ESPECIALLY IN IMPRESSING IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING LID ON IN INDOCHINA.

6. NORTH KOREA, UNTIL NOW ENJOYING EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH BOTH PRC AND DRV, HAS CHOSEN TO SUPPORT FORMER.
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JANUARY 23 FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT REFERRED TO ISLANDS AS "SACRED TERRITORY OF PRC." KISSINGER

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